

**Data Preview I: Seat Belts**

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed two questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Reported Seat Belt Usage

The percentage of drivers reporting that they used seat belts "all of the time" when they drive has increased over the several years this survey has been administered. In 1994 the figure stood at 74%, rising to 76% in 1996 and to 79% in 1998. However, similar to previous years, a segment of these self-reported full time belt users readily admitted that they hadn't worn their seat belt recently. Among drivers who said they wore their seat belts all the time, 10% noted on a follow-up question that they did not wear their seat belt at least once while driving in the past day or week.

Driving At Work and Seat Belt Policies

One-third (34%) of drivers reported that they at least sometimes drove a vehicle as part of a job or business (not including driving to and from work). When asked how frequently they drove on the job, most of these drivers replied "almost every day" (56%) or "a few days a week" (26%). About one-half (48%) also said their company or business had a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job. Usually they thought it was a written policy (67%) although some believed it was an unwritten policy (25%) while others were unsure (8%). If drivers at least on occasion wore seat belts, and believed their company had a seat belt policy, they were twice as likely as those who said there was no policy (31% to 16%) to report higher belt use when driving on the job compared to personal driving.

Attitudes About The Benefits Of Seat Belts

The vast majority of the public (86%) strongly agreed that if they were in a motor vehicle crash, they would want to have their seat belt on; while 8% somewhat agreed. Yet responses to another question pointed to qualms about seat belts among a segment of the population as 15% of the public strongly agreed with the statement that "seat belts are just as likely to

harm you as help you" and 23% somewhat agreed. Still, about two-thirds of the public either strongly (42%) or somewhat (26%) agreed with the statement that "medical insurance costs would be lower if more people wore seat belts."

Attitudes and Knowledge About Seat Belt Laws And Their Enforcement

At the time this survey was administered, all but one state had a seat belt law requiring usage by adults. As shown in the table on the back, most persons favored seat belt laws, and knew their state had enacted a law. The table also shows greater support and knowledge in states where the provisions of the law permit standard enforcement, i.e., law enforcement officers can stop a vehicle on the basis of witnessing a seat belt violation. In secondary enforcement states, witnessing a seat belt violation can not be the basis for stopping a vehicle; ticketing for a seat belt violation can only occur when the vehicle has been stopped for some other reason. Public support of standard enforcement increased from 52% in 1996 to 58%. Interestingly, respondents in secondary states were more likely to believe they were subject to standard enforcement provisions (41%) than secondary enforcement provisions (36%). In general, beliefs and attitudes tended to agree. Regardless of the actual provisions enacted in their state, 69% of persons who believed their state permitted standard enforcement also favored standard enforcement. Likewise, 59% of persons who believed their seat belt law was governed by secondary enforcement provisions favored secondary enforcement.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
**National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration**

Office of Research and Traffic Records
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

		Total	Standard*	Secondary**
How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts?	Favor A Lot	67%	70%	65%
	Favor Some	19%	18%	20%
	Not Favor At All	13%	11%	13%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	1%
Do you think that seat belt laws should also apply to back seat adult passengers?	Yes	67%	69%	66%
	No	14%	14%	13%
	Depends On Age	1%	1%	2%
	Don't Know/Refused	4%	3%	4%
	***Don't Favor Front Seat Law	14%	13%	15%
Do you favor or oppose fines for drivers who do not wear seat belts?	Favor	61%	65%	58%
	Oppose	21%	19%	22%
	Don't Know/Refused	4%	4%	5%
	***Don't Favor Front Seat Law	14%	13%	15%
Do you favor or oppose receiving points against a license as a penalty for seat belt violations?	Favor	30%	34%	27%
	Oppose	49%	45%	51%
	Depends On Past Violations	3%	2%	3%
	Don't Know/Refused	5%	6%	4%
	***Don't Favor Front Seat Law	14%	13%	15%
Suppose you get a ticket for not wearing your seat belt. Which of the following better describes your likely reaction?	I Deserve The Ticket Because			
	I Broke The Law	67%	72%	63%
	Ticket Is Undeserved (Use Should Be Personal Choice)	30%	25%	34%
	Don't Know/Refused	3%	3%	3%
Does (respondent's state) have a law requiring seat belt use?	Yes	94%	96%	93%
	No	1%	1%	2%
	Don't Know/Refused	5%	3%	6%
According to your state law, can police stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation or do they have to observe some other offense first in order to stop the vehicle?	Can Stop For Belt Violation	55%	74%	41%
	Have To Observe Other Offense First	26%	11%	36%
	Don't Know	14%	11%	16%
	****Unaware Of Belt Law	6%	4%	7%
In your opinion, <u>should</u> police be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation when no other traffic laws are being violated?	Yes	58%	68%	50%
	No	39%	29%	46%
	Don't Know/Refused	3%	3%	4%
Have you ever received a (ticket/warning) for not wearing seat belts?	Ticket Only	6%	7%	5%
	Warning Only	4%	4%	4%
	Ticket And Warning	2%	2%	1%
	Neither	88%	87%	89%

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Data Preview II: Child Restraints

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed two questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Children Riding in the Front Seat

A number of tragic air bag-related fatalities among children in the past few years has underscored that the back seat is the safest seating position for children in a motor vehicle. NHTSA and others have urged that children age 12 and younger ride buckled up in a rear seat. The survey explored whether the public has accepted this message by asking drivers about the seating position of the youngest child, age 12 or younger, living in their household (almost 1400 cases in the survey). About half (48%) stated that the child did not ride in the front seat at all in the past 30 days while riding with them, and 15% said the child rode in the front seat only a few times during the same time period. But 16% reported that the child rode in the front seat nearly all the time and 6% claimed it occurred most of the time.

The survey also questioned drivers about whether the seating position of the child is now different than what it was 12 months earlier. Over half (51%) said that the child is now less likely to ride in the front seat when they drive. Nineteen percent indicated that the child is more likely to ride in the front, while 23% reported that the child is just as likely to ride in the front compared to a year ago. Those who said that the child was less likely to ride in the front most often gave "safer in back" (59%) and "danger from air bags" (21%) as reasons. Reasons for increased front seat riding included "child prefers the front" (41%) and "no other place for child in vehicle" (22%)

movement of children from car seats to seat belts. The age and weight breakouts in the Table are based on small numbers, their purpose is solely to show the general trend and consistency across years.

Concerns Over Booster Seats

The data show that booster seats are not being used as much as they should be. The survey asked the above driver subgroup whether they had ever seen or heard of booster seats. These drivers would be expected to be the segment of the population most familiar with the devices. But 21% replied that they had not seen or heard of them, and 3% didn't know if they had. Among the 76% who were familiar with them, almost one-third (30%) had concerns about booster seats (another 7% were unsure), generally questioning how secure the attachments were and how well the child was restrained. Thus among the total driver subgroup, fewer than half (48%) knew about booster seats and had no concerns about them.

Requiring Restraint Use By Children

As shown in the Table, the vast majority of the public believe children should be required to wear seat belts when they outgrow car seats, and that all children should be required to be in restraints. The public also favors strong enforcement of child restraint laws.

Car Seat Use By Children Under Age 6

The survey asked detailed questions to a subgroup of drivers (defined in a footnote to the Table on back; 754 cases) about car seat use by children under age 6. Most (71%) claimed that the child rode in a car seat "all the time" when riding with them as they drove. As shown in the Table, this figure noticeably declines at about ages 3-4, largely reflecting



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	1998	1996	1994*
** Parents/Caregivers			
The child (under age 6) rides in a car seat ALL THE TIME when you are driving and he/she rides in the vehicle with you.			
Total	71%	63%	59%
Child's Age:			
Newborn (140 >N>115)***	98%	96%	88%
1 Year (107>N>79)	99%	89%	86%
2 Years (143>N>127)	95%	91%	85%
3 Years (131>N>101)	80%	75%	56%
4 Years (153>N>132)	46%	33%	33%
5 Years (149>N>123)	22%	17%	17%
Child's Weight:			
Less Than 20 (88>N>81)	99%	96%	93%
20-29 Pounds (194>N>175)	95%	86%	89%
30-39 Pounds (250>N>234)	76%	68%	60%
40+ Pounds (254>N>227)	38%	29%	27%
Total Population			
On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police should hardly ever give tickets, and 10 means police should give a ticket at every opportunity for violations of child car seat laws, how strict should police enforcement be?			
1-3	5%	7%	6%
4-6	9%	12%	10%
7-9	23%	22%	20%
10 (Every Opportunity)	60%	53%	58%
Don't Know/Refused	4%	6%	6%
****What about when children outgrow a car seat? Do you agree or disagree that they should be required by law to wear seat belts when riding in a vehicle?			
Agree	94%	94%	94%
Disagree	3%	4%	4%
Depends On Age	2%	1%	1%
Don't Know (DK)/Refused	1%	1%	1%
****How old do you think children should be before they are not required by law to wear seat belts or do you think all children should be required to wear them?			
Required Of All Children	81%	85%	81%
Under 6	2%	1%	2%
6-12	3%	3%	4%
13+	6%	4%	4%
Not Required Any Age	3%	1%	---
Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	3%
Disagree/DK/Refused To Previous Question	5%	5%	6%



* Minor adjustments have been made to 1994 age and weight numbers for analytic consistency across years.

** A subgroup of drivers who answered detailed child restraint questions. They were: a) parents of children under age 6 (usually living with them, but also a few parents not living with the children but who sometimes drove with them), and b) non-parents living with children under age 6 who sometimes drove with them. *** The number of respondents in this category in each year was between 115 and 140. **** Slight change in wording in 1998.

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Data Preview III: Air Bags

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed 2 questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Air Bag In Primary Vehicle

More than half of drivers (53%) said that the vehicle they normally drive has an air bag, set on the driver side only (18%) or both the driver and passenger sides (34%). Comparing the numbers across years shows air bags rapidly penetrating the vehicle fleet (see Table on back). The survey did not ask about side impact air bags due to the recency of their introduction. Future surveys will question drivers about the presence of these devices.

Concern Over Air Bags

The 1996 survey entered the field during a period of heightened concern over air bag safety due to extensive publicity at that time of incidents where children were fatally struck by air bags. That year, 62% of the public admitted having safety concerns about air bags. Fewer (51%) said they had air bag concerns in the 1998 survey. Besides this decrease, the nature of the concerns shifted. Among persons who said they had concerns, 58% specifically referred to child injury in 1996 as opposed to 41% in 1998. Only 21% specifically referred to adult injuries in 1996 versus 30% in 1998. The percentage of persons who referred to injuries but didn't categorize the victim also increased, from 22% in 1996 to 30% in 1998. Concern about air bags was more prevalent among females (56%) than males (46%). Females were less likely than males to say that they felt safer in vehicles with air bags (36% to 45%) and less likely to want both driver and passenger air bags on their next vehicle (65% to 75%).

Knowledge About Air Bags

The public largely knew an air bag is not a substitute for a seat belt; only 4% incorrectly agreed that they did not need to wear a seat belt if an air bag was present. But other items showed lack of understanding of how air bags work. When asked the minimum speed a vehicle would have to be hit for an air bag to deploy, the most frequent response was "Don't Know" (35%). No single speed, or range of speeds, garnered more than a small percentage of votes as responses spread widely from 1 to more than 75 mph, suggesting that most were guessing. Much of the public also did not know that air bags in most vehicles currently on the road are designed to deploy only in front impact collisions. Almost half (46%) expected an air bag to deploy if they were hit from the back at moderate speed; 43% expected deployment when hit from the side. Despite the recent advent of side impact air bags, the 43% figure is consistent with findings in previous years when few such devices had been installed, suggesting that the response was not based on awareness of the change.



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		1998	1996	1994
**Does the (vehicle) you normally drive have an air bag?	Yes, Driver Side Only	18%	19%	16%
	Yes, Driver and Passenger	34%	19%	7%
	Yes, Don't Know Type	1%	*	*
	No	46%	61%	75%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	1%
**If you are driving in a vehicle that has an air bag and you get into an accident involving major vehicle damage is it likely or unlikely that you would be injured?	Likely	33%	34%	22%
	Unlikely	40%	42%	55%
	Depends	13%	7%	8%
	Don't Know/Refused	14%	17%	15%
Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement. If my car has a (driver/passenger) side air bag, I don't need to wear my seat belt when (driving/riding).	Agree	4%	5%	6%
	Disagree	92%	93%	90%
	Don't Know/Refused	3%	3%	4%
Do you have any concerns about the safety of air bags?	Yes	51%	62%	NA
	No	46%	36%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	3%	2%	NA
Based on what you know or have heard, how likely is it that an adult sitting in the front seat would be injured by an air bag when it opens normally?	Very Likely	14%	13%	NA
	Somewhat Likely	38%	34%	NA
	Somewhat Unlikely	19%	23%	NA
	Very Unlikely	15%	20%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	14%	10%	NA
How likely is it that a small child sitting in the front seat would be injured by an air bag when it opens normally?	Very Likely	59%	54%	NA
	Somewhat Likely	22%	27%	NA
	Somewhat Unlikely	6%	7%	NA
	Very Unlikely	4%	5%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	9%	7%	NA
In general, do you feel safer in motor vehicles with air bags, about the same, or less safe in vehicles with air bags than those without air bags?	Safer	40%	42%	NA
	About The Same	43%	41%	NA
	Less Safe	8%	10%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	8%	8%	NA
Would you prefer that your next vehicle have driver side air bags only, driver and passenger side air bags or no air bags?	Driver Side Only	5%	9%	NA
	Driver and Passenger Side	70%	63%	NA
	No Air Bags	18%	22%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	7%	6%	NA



Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding. *Less than .5%. ** Asked of drivers whose primary vehicle is not a motorcycle. NA - The question was not asked during that year.

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Data Preview IV: Motorcycle Use

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed 2 questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Driving Or Riding A Motorcycle

Fewer than one in ten persons age 16 and older (8%) said they had driven a motorcycle in the past 12 months. Males (14%) were far more likely than females (2%) to report this activity. Little evidence emerged that motorcyclists were clustered within a single age group as the percentage of motorcyclists was approximately the same among persons in their teens (9%), their 20s (10%), their 30s (10%), or their 40s (11%). While a drop-off occurred among persons in their 50s (5%), driving a motorcycle continued for some to age 60 and beyond (3%).

Seven percent of the public reported riding as a passenger on a motorcycle during the past 12 months. Combined with the drivers above, this means that 13% of the population age 16 and older had driven or ridden as a passenger on a motorcycle in the past 12 months (2% had done both). Unlike driving a motorcycle, riding as a passenger was more likely to be reported by females (9%) than males (6%), and far more likely to be reported by persons under the age of 25 (18%) than 25 and older (5%).

Helmet Use

Among persons who said they had driven a motorcycle in the past year, about two-thirds stated that they wore a helmet either all (60%) or most (8%) of the time. This was about a ten percentage point drop from two years earlier (in both years, there were a total of about 350 motorcyclists in the survey sample). The numbers of motorcyclists were too few to analyze differences in reported helmet use according to whether the state had a helmet law. However, the general pattern was for higher helmet usage in states requiring helmet use by all riders, compared to states with lesser or no requirements.

Among persons who said they had ridden as a passenger on a motorcycle in the past 12 months, 75% indicated that they wore a helmet the last time they rode. As with driving a motorcycle, the data suggested greater use of helmets by passengers in states requiring use by all riders, but was based on too few cases to present any statistics with confidence.

Support For Helmet Laws

Four-fifths (80%) of the public reported that they favored mandatory helmet use laws for motorcyclists. This reflects little difference over the two previous administrations of this survey (see Table on back). Support was more prevalent among females (89%) than males (71%), and among non-motorcyclists (83%) than those who drove motorcycles (47%) with this gap seeming to have widened in the past two years. Support also was higher in states requiring all riders to wear helmets (84%), compared to states having lesser requirements (75%) or no requirements (79%).

Drinking and Driving A Motorcycle

Respondents who had driven a motorcycle in the past year were asked if they had done so after drinking alcoholic beverages over that time period. Few (8%) reported that they had.



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		1998	1996	1994
Have you driven a motorcycle in the past 12 months?	Yes	8%	8%	8%
	No	82%	84%	83%
	Don't Know/Refused	*	*	*
	Non-Driver	10%	8%	9%
If yes: How often do you wear a helmet when you drive a motorcycle?	All Of The Time	60%	70%	67%
	Most Of The Time	8%	8%	11%
	Some Of The Time	5%	5%	7%
	Rarely	5%	7%	5%
	Never	19%	9%	11%
	Don't Know	2%	—	—
	Refused/No Response	1%	—	—
During the past 12 months, have you driven a motorcycle after drinking alcoholic beverages?	Yes	8%	7%	8%
	No	91%	92%	92%
	Don't Know/Refused	*	1%	—
During the past 12 months, have you ridden as a passenger on a motorcycle?	Yes	7%	8%	8%
	No	92%	92%	92%
	Don't Know/Refused	*	*	*
If yes: Did you wear a helmet the last time you rode as a passenger?	Yes	75%	78%	78%
	No	25%	21%	22%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	—
Do you favor or oppose mandatory helmet use laws for motorcyclists?				
Total Population	Favor	80%	81%	82%
	Oppose	16%	15%	15%
	Don't Know/Refused	4%	4%	4%
Motorcyclists (Drivers)	Favor	47%	56%	54%
	Oppose	48%	42%	43%
	Don't Know/Refused	5%	2%	3%
Non-Motorcyclists	Favor	83%	83%	84%
	Oppose	13%	13%	12%
	Don't Know/Refused	4%	4%	4%



Numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding. * Less than .5%. — No cases.

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Data Preview V: Emergency Medical Services

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed 2 questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Access To Emergency Care

When asked who they would call first in a medical emergency, 89% of the public said they would call 9-1-1 (see Table on back). This may understate the case as other responses to that question could have been alternative ways of referring to 9-1-1. Therefore, the remaining 11% of the sample were asked if there was a particular telephone number to call for emergencies in their community, and if so, what was the number? This follow-up questioning brought the total percentage of the public who reported having 9-1-1 service to 95%.

Called An Emergency Number

Forty-two percent of the public said they had personally called 9-1-1 or another emergency number for help sometime in the past. Blacks (47%) were more likely to report this than whites (42%) or Hispanics (34%). Usually respondents called for an ambulance (55%) or police (28%).

Confidence In The EMS Response

A plurality of the public (41%) believed it would take an ambulance five minutes or less to respond to a medical emergency in their neighborhood while 29% estimated it would take the ambulance six-to-ten minutes to arrive. Two-thirds (68%) of the public said they were very confident that the ambulance or other emergency workers would know what to do regardless of the medical emergency; 28% were somewhat confident.

As in previous years, the 1998 results showed racial differences in confidence in the EMS system. Fully 72% of whites expected the ambulance to arrive in ten minutes or less compared to 58% of blacks and 69% of Hispanics. Similarly, 70% of whites were very confident that the emergency workers would know what to do compared to 59% of blacks and 67% of Hispanics.

Providing Bystander Care

Interviewers presented a scenario to respondents in which they were driving, saw a crash, and no one was at the scene to help. When asked what concerns they might have about stopping to help, 54% professed no concerns. Almost two-thirds (64%) asserted they definitely would stop in this situation. If respondents were then told it was too dangerous to stop and help at the scene, and asked how likely they would be to call for help from the nearest available phone, 88% said they definitely would call and 10% said they probably would call.

Three-fifths of blacks (60%) and Hispanics (61%) claimed having no concerns about stopping to help compared to 53% of whites. However, concerns about personal safety increased among blacks from 1996 (12%) to 1998 (21%). Hispanics also showed an increase over this time frame (9% to 16%) while whites stayed about the same (16% to 18%). When asked their likelihood of stopping, 61% of blacks, 64% of whites, and 65% of Hispanics contended they definitely would stop.



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1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

		1998	1996	1994
If someone was experiencing a medical emergency and you needed to get help for that person, who would you call first?	9-1-1	89%	88%	84%
	Police	2%	2%	5%
	EMS	4%	4%	4%
	AmbulanceService	1%	2%	2%
	Fire Department	*	1%	1%
	Rescue Squad	*	*	1%
	Other Response	3%	2%	3%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	1%
Is there a particular telephone number to call for medical emergencies in your community?	Answered 9-1-1 To Above Question or To This Question	95%	93%	91%
	Yes, Gave Another Number	1%	1%	2%
	No	2%	2%	3%
	Don't Know/Refused	2%	3%	4%
If there was a medical emergency in your neighborhood and you called an ambulance, how long do you think it would take for the ambulance to arrive?	1-5 minutes	41%	42%	42%
	6-10 minutes	29%	27%	28%
	11-15 minutes	12%	12%	13%
	16+ minutes	12%	13%	13%
	Don't Know/Refused	6%	5%	5%
Have you, personally, ever called 9-1-1 or another emergency number for help?	Yes	42%	41%	NA
	No	58%	59%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	*	*	NA
Suppose that you are driving, you see an accident happen, and no one is there at the scene to help. What concerns might you have about stopping to help?	No Concerns/Would Stop*	54%	52%	59%
	Ability To Assist	13%	16%	12%
	Personal Safety	18%	15%	15%
	Lawsuits/Liability	11%	12%	10%
	Victim's Safety	6%	6%	8%
	Other	1%	2%	1%
	Don't Know/Refused	5%	4%	5%
How likely would you be to stop?	Definitely Would	64%	59%	NA
	Probably Would	27%	29%	NA
	Probably Would Not	4%	5%	NA
	Definitely Would Not	2%	2%	NA
	Depends	3%	3%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	NA
****Do you have a car phone or (ever) carry a cellular phone in the motor vehicle you usually drive?	Yes	44%	31%	17%
	No	56%	69%	83%
	Don't Know/Refused	*	*	*



Numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding. * Less than .5%. ** Numbers total more than 100% due to multiple response. *** Includes those who said they would stop to call. **** Drivers only. The wording was slightly revised in 1996.

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Data Preview VI: Bicycle Use

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed 2 questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Riding A Bicycle

Riding a bicycle on icy roads or in the midst of cold or inclement weather is not a pleasant experience. Thus the level of bicycling activity will vary according to the time of year. The Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey primarily focuses on occupant protection issues and is administered between November and January, well outside the peak bicycle riding months. Still, 13% of the population age 16 and older said they had ridden a bicycle in the past 30 days. Another 24% reported riding a bicycle in the past 12 months, though not during the past 30 days.

Riding a bicycle in the past year was more common among males (44%) than females (30%). As expected, the youngest (16-24) age group was most likely to report riding a bicycle (53%), followed by those 25-34 (48%) and those 35-44 (46%).

Wearing A Bicycle Helmet

All respondents who said they rode a bicycle in the past year were asked if they usually wore a bicycle helmet when they rode. About one-quarter (26%) replied "yes." The Table on the back shows this to be an increase compared to several years earlier. Bike riders ages 16-24 were less likely to say they usually wore a helmet (17%) compared to those ages 25-34 (27%) and those 35-44 (27%). The numbers of older bike riders in the sample were too few to analyze separately. As indicated by the above statistics, the youngest age group was most likely to ride a bicycle, but less likely to wear a bicycle helmet compared to their older peers.

Child Riding A Bicycle

If respondents had one or more children ages 4 through 12 living in their household, the interviewer selected one child about whom to ask the respondent a short series of bicycling questions. More than 1100 respondents lived with a child this age, with the vast majority (85%) saying that the child had ridden a bicycle in the past 12 months. The percentage of bike riding children who were reported to have bicycle helmets increased dramatically in the past four years, from 57% in 1994 to 81% in 1998. Yet having a helmet did not necessarily mean that the child usually wore it; more than one in ten of those with a helmet reportedly did not.

Support For Child Helmet Laws

About four-out-of-five persons (82%) supported laws that require children to wear bicycle helmets, similar to results from previous years. Support was slightly higher among females (87%), blacks (87%), and Hispanics (87%). It also was somewhat higher among persons not having children age 12 or younger in their household (84%) compared to those that do (77%).



U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration

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400 Seventh Street, S.W.
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1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

		1998	1996	1994
Have you ridden a bicycle at all during the past (30 days/12 months)?	Yes, Past 30 Days	13%	11%	14%
	Yes, Past 12 Months (but not past 30 days)	24%	28%	21%
	No	63%	61%	65%
	Not Sure/Refused	*	*	*
If yes: Do you usually wear a bicycle helmet when you ride a bike?	Yes	26%	23%	18%
	No	74%	77%	81%
	Not Sure/Refused	*	*	*
**During the past 12 months, has the (child age 4-12) ridden a bicycle?	Yes	85%	79%	80%
	No	15%	21%	19%
	Not Sure/Refused	*	*	1%
If yes: Does he/she have a bicycle helmet?	Yes	81%	76%	57%
	No	19%	24%	42%
	Not Sure/Refused	—	*	1%
Does he/she usually wear it?	Yes	70%	63%	48%
	No	10%	13%	9%
	Not Sure/Refused	1%	1%	1%
	***Don't Have Helmet	19%	24%	43%
Do you favor or oppose laws which require children to wear bicycle helmets?				
Total Population	Favor	82%	81%	79%
	Oppose	12%	13%	14%
	Depends On Age Of Child	1%	1%	1%
	Depends Where They Ride	2%	1%	2%
	Don't Know/Refused	3%	4%	5%
Child Age 12 Or Younger In Household	Favor	77%	79%	73%
	Oppose	15%	14%	17%
	Depends On Age Of Child	1%	1%	1%
	Depends Where They Ride	3%	2%	4%
	Don't Know/Refused	3%	4%	5%
No Child Age 12 Or Younger In Household	Favor	84%	82%	82%
	Oppose	11%	13%	12%
	Depends On Age Of Child	1%	1%	1%
	Depends Where They Ride	2%	1%	1%
	Don't Know/Refused	3%	3%	5%



Numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding. *Less than .5%. **Asked of persons with child age 4-12 in household, with one specific child selected as the focus of the question. ***Includes those who weren't sure.

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Data Preview VII: Racial/Ethnic Subgroups

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed 2 questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Defining Groups For Analysis

The survey employed two questions to identify ethnic and racial background. The first asked respondents if they considered themselves to be Hispanic or Latino. Those who said "Yes" composed the Hispanic analytic subgroup in the study. The second question recited several different racial categories, and asked respondents which categories described them. Respondents could select more than one. For purposes of analysis, a respondent was assigned to a specific racial category if s/he selected only that category. The few respondents who selected multiple categories were considered as a separate group.

Crash Injury Experience

Twenty-eight percent of all persons age 16 and older have been injured in a motor vehicle crash at some time in the past. This is higher than in past versions of the survey, largely due to inclusion of a new follow-up question devised to capture persons who might have omitted injuries as passengers, pedestrians, or bicyclists. The Table on back shows whites (29%) and blacks (28%) more likely than Hispanics (21%) to report having experienced a crash injury that required medical attention.

General Driving

Blacks (21%) and Hispanics (23%) were more than three times as likely as whites (6%) to be non-drivers. Whereas 82% of whites said they drove almost every day, less than two-thirds of blacks (66%) and Hispanics (65%) said the same.

Attitudes And Behaviors About Seat Belt Use

Most black (75%), Hispanic (85%), and white (79%) drivers reported that they wore their seat belt all the time while driving. The perceived utility of seat belts was also high as 86% of blacks, 91% of Hispanics, and

85% of whites strongly agreed with the statement "if I were in an accident, I would want to have my seat belt on."

Yet other items pointed to a more fatalistic outlook among blacks and Hispanics. About one-half of blacks (49%) and Hispanics (51%) either strongly or somewhat agreed that "seat belts are just as likely to harm you as help you," compared to 35% of whites. Similarly, 40% of blacks, 31% of Hispanics, and 25% of whites agreed that "if it is your time to die, you'll die, so it doesn't matter whether you wear your seat belt." Seat belts may also raise anxieties among these groups as 25% of blacks, 27% of Hispanics, and 11% of whites either strongly or somewhat agreed that "putting on a seat belt makes me worry more about being in an accident." Moreover, blacks (25%) and Hispanics (44%) were more likely than whites (13%) to strongly or somewhat agree that "I would feel self-conscious around my friends if I wore a seat belt and they did not."

Support For Traffic Safety Laws

As shown in the Table, blacks and Hispanics tended to voice greater support for traffic safety laws than whites. At the same time, blacks (19%) and Hispanics (21%) were more likely than whites (16%) in the study to report being stopped by police in the past year for a traffic-related reason while driving, although the numbers of black and Hispanic drivers asked the question were too few for the differences to be statistically significant.



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1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

		Black	Hispanic	White
**Have you ever been injured in a motor vehicle accident? Only count injuries that required medical attention.	Yes	28%	21%	29%
	No	72%	78%	71%
	Don't Know/Refused	*	*	*
How often do you drive a motor vehicle?	Almost Every Day	66%	65%	82%
	A Few Days A Week	9%	9%	10%
	A Few Days A Month	2%	2%	1%
	A Few Days A Year	1%	1%	1%
	Never	21%	23%	6%
***When driving this (vehicle), how often do you wear your (shoulder/lap) belt?	All The Time	75%	85%	79%
	Most Of The Time	13%	9%	12%
	Some Of The Time	8%	3%	5%
	Rarely	2%	1%	2%
	Never	2%	2%	2%
How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these laws at all?	Favor A Lot	74%	82%	65%
	Favor Some	20%	13%	20%
	Not Favor At All	5%	5%	15%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	*	1%
In your opinion, should police be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation when no other traffic laws are being broken?	Should Be Allowed	61%	73%	56%
	Should Not Be Allowed	36%	25%	41%
	Don't Know/Refused	4%	2%	3%
What about when children outgrow a child car seat? Do you agree or disagree that they should be required by law to wear seat belts when riding in a vehicle?	Agree	93%	95%	94%
	Disagree	3%	2%	4%
	Depends On Age	2%	2%	1%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	1%
Do you favor or oppose laws which require children to wear bicycle helmets?	Favor	87%	87%	80%
	Oppose	9%	9%	13%
	Depends	3%	1%	3%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	3%	4%
Do you favor or oppose mandatory helmet use laws for motorcyclists?	Favor	89%	85%	79%
	Oppose	6%	11%	17%
	Don't Know/Refused	6%	4%	4%

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Numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding. * Less than .5%. ** Includes follow-up question asking respondents if they were injured as passengers or as pedestrians/bicyclists. *** Drivers only.